

THERE'S something about a Monday evening for Wycombe Wanderers. Exactly a week after they had been knocked out of the F.A. Trophy by Hayes, Wycombe slumped to their heaviest defeat of the season, in a Berger Isthmian League match at Croydon — on Monday.

I don't want to build this up into some sort of superstition but the only other two games this season that Blues have played on a Monday have also ended in disappointing defeats by Walthamstow and by Crystal Palace in a friendly.

It is just one of those coincidences that are liable to be remembered by players as they go out for the game. I wonder what sort of an omen it is for the Berks and Bucks Senior Cup final — if they get there — as that is due to be played on Easter Monday.

Leaving superstitions aside, there was a perfectly down-to-earth reason why Wycombe lost

Croydon 3, Wycombe Wanderers 0 Report by MICHAEL KNOX

that night. They still had not recovered their mental alertness after that Hayes defeat and came up against one of the best organised sides in the league.

Even though they faced against Wycombe on an off-night, Croydon appeared one of the most stylish sides I have seen this season, and in 17 year old winger Ray Sunnucks they have an excellent prospect. His name could be one to watch out for in the future.

He gave right back Steve Hardwick a really tough game and was directly responsible for one of the three goals. Hardwick played in that position because Paul Birdseye missed the match through influenza.

With all their other injury problems, Wycombe's squad was stretched to its limit. Keith Mead returned to the back four, while Dylan Evans was preferred to Stewart Atkins upfront.

When the teams met earlier in the season at Loakes Park, the match ended in a goalless draw. That result seemed to be on the

cards again in the opening 15 minutes of the return encounter.

Neither defence seemed in much trouble as the sides struggled to lift their game in a completely dead atmosphere. There was only a smattering of spectators, and they were separated from the pitch by an athletics track. So there was little to boost the players' morale.

No warning

There was absolutely no warning of the burst to come when Croydon scored two goals in as many minutes virtually to clinch the game there and then.

In recent matches Blues have become particularly susceptible to high balls into the penalty area and this weakness was again in evidence, particularly for the first goal after 19 minutes.

Robin Gonzales ran unmarked on to a throw-in from the left side and pumped an early curling ball into the area. The ball evaded the Wycombe cover and there was the tall Charlie Pooley to head past Chris Way from some 12 yards.

The goalkeeper could in no way be faulted for the goal — but the same could not be said for the rest of his defence.

The second goal was a beauty, which Wycombe had no way of stopping once Sunnucks had got past Hardwick on the left. He curled a cross short of the near post, but Rod Ward dived forward to score with a header from the narrowest possible angle.

Blues were hindered at this stage by some short clearances upfield by Way. At present he loses some distance by kicking the ball too high. This fault will no doubt soon be rectified.

The visitors struggled to find any rhythm in mid-field and without Birdseye's long throw-ins which usually cause so many problems, they created desperately few chances in the first half.

Two chances

However just after the interval they had two chances to get back into the game. But both were thwarted by the determined Croydon defence.

First, Terry Scott saw a shot blocked on the line by a defender's foot after good work by Bobby Davies, and then goalkeeper Dave Cobb saved well from Howard Kennedy after Mick Holfield had set up a scoring position.

Once these chances had been missed, there was never a hope that the game could be pulled out of the fire and Croydon made doubly sure with a brilliant goal in the 55th minute.

A great long ball out of defence found Pooley, who controlled it before placing it in the path of Ward. He sent a rocket of a shot into the top corner. Way had no chance.

The appearance of Atkins, who came on for Scott added a bit of life upfront and he twice threatened the goal with powerful long range efforts. But he, like his colleagues, was unable to get close enough even to pull back a consolation goal.

CROYDON: D. Cobb; B. Constable, B. Walker, A. Ward, R. Shimmers, R. Gonzales, A. Prime, A. Jackson, C. Pooley (sub J. Sears 80 mins), R. Ward, R. Sunnucks.

WYCOMBE: C. Way; S. Hardwick, R. Davies, K. Mead, A. Phillips, L. Reed, D. Evans, M. Holfield, S. Long, H. Kennedy, T. Scott (sub S. Atkins, 65 mins).

Referee: A. Coletta.

Half-time: 2-0. **Scorers:** Croydon — Pooley (19 mins), Ward (21.55).

MASKELL SET FOR RETURN AT SLOUGH

AFTER their elimination from the FA Trophy at the hands of Hayes, Wycombe Wanderers now have only one realistic chance of claiming honours this season, namely in the Berks and Bucks Senior Cup.

They resume their challenge for the title tomorrow (Saturday) when they meet old rivals Slough Town in a semi-final replay at Wexham Park.

This will be the fourth meeting between the clubs this season and Blues have yet to record a victory. In the Isthmian League they lost at home before drawing away, and in the Cup the teams drew 1-1 after extra time at Loakes Park.

Blues have invariably fared better against Slough away from home and they will be further encouraged by the probable return of first choice goalkeeper John Maskell, who has been out for three weeks with a trapped nerve in his back.

Russell doubt

His steadying influence should reinforce the defence, which has looked distinctly shaky in the past three matches. Blues will also be hoping that full-back Paul Birdseye recovers from the influenza which caused him to miss Monday's match at Croydon.

Slough, currently second in the league table, also have a cou-

ple of fitness doubts. Their talented forward Dave Russell pulled a groin muscle in the midweek 1-1 draw with Leatherhead, while striker Paul Lee has missed a couple of games through illness.

One man who definitely will not be playing for Slough is Peter Feeley who scored the equaliser that took the tie to a replay. He is in Hong Kong for a week to play for Urban Services in the local cup final out there.

This has caused a series of administrative problems for the Slough secretary Roger Lee with regard to the registration forms and legal documents required for Feeley's unusual journey.

Wycombe's next league match is at Oxford City on Tuesday. It was originally arranged for Wednesday but has been brought forward because Oxford United have a home game that night.

BERGER ISTHMIAN LEAGUE PREMIER DIVISION

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barking	30	18	8	4	66	43	62
Slough	33	17	8	8	47	34	59
Enfield	28	17	5	6	52	28	56
Dagenham	28	16	5	7	55	41	53
Dulwich	30	14	10	6	51	28	52
Wycombe	31	15	7	9	45	31	52
Hendon	33	13	11	9	42	37	50
Croydon	28	14	6	8	41	26	48
Leatherhead	29	13	6	10	43	29	45
Woking	30	12	9	9	57	45	45
Boreham Wood	34	12	9	13	44	51	45
Tooting	31	12	8	11	42	40	44
Hitchin	34	12	8	14	54	59	44
Oxford	34	12	7	15	43	60	43
Tilbury	33	10	9	14	48	65	38
Sutton	30	10	8	12	41	36	38
Walthamstow	31	11	5	15	46	53	38
Carshalton	29	7	10	12	37	49	31
Hayes	30	6	11	13	31	44	29
Staines	30	5	12	13	31	48	27
Kingston	34	3	11	20	26	54	20
Leytonstone	32	3	5	24	24	65	14